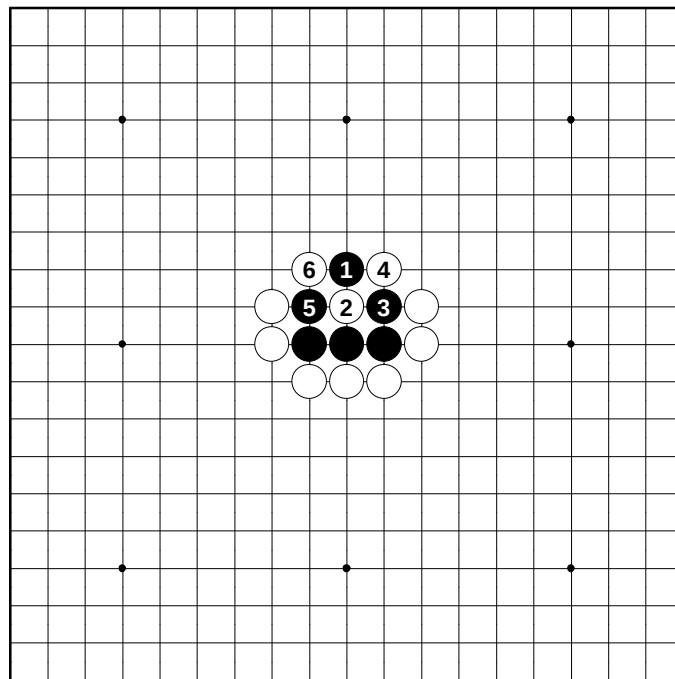


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# Chinese Go

## *part 3*



by

**Guo Juan**

## Chapter 3                      My Go School

My Go School was located in the centre of Chengdu (the capitol of the Sichuan province), at the corner of Chunxi Road. During the Cultural Revolution it was called Fandi Road, Fandi meaning anti-imperialism.

Chunxi Road is the busiest shopping street in Chengdu. There you can find not only shops, but also a lot of street peddlers selling all kinds of goods. They compete very hard, so they have to shout at the top of their voice, everyone trying to sell more than the others. Fortunately, the Go School had a very impressive door, black, large, high and thick, and it kept out all the street noise. The door helped very well against the noise but it also had a small drawback, because like most other Chinese doors, it didn't have a bell. So, when the door was closed, and there was nobody close by when you wanted to get in, you were in trouble.

Our school consisted of a two floor house, a big hall and two small gardens. The house was coloured grey and built mainly of wood. It had several big and small class rooms, two big bedrooms for girls, and in the attic bedrooms for the boys. The big hall contained many chairs and tables, for training and also for political studies. I remember we often had to come together to listen to our director read things like "guidelines of the Party" which we did not really understand. In the middle of the bigger garden there was a pingpong table, and in the morning we did our physical training there. The garden had another function: during the winter time when the sun was shining (Chengdu doesn't have much sunshine during the winter), we liked to sit on of those noisy bamboo chairs in the sunshine.

We had very special Go boards, because they were square instead of rectangular. Maybe you never paid attention to the shape of a Go board, but it is unlikely that you ever saw a square one. These boards were very big and heavy. We had only very small glass stones at that time (because glass stones are cheap). They looked poor and lonely on these big boards. Some years later when I was in the national team, I missed our big boards because the expensive boards were a bit too small and the luxurious stones were a bit too big. When you played a long game, the board became too crowded.

The school had two bosses. The director Mr. Xu, was not a real Revolutionary type (of course he was a member of the Party), but a big Go fan. He was not as strong as he thought he was, but he played Go all the time when there were no guidelines from the Party. He also very much liked to win, many years later when I visited him again and asked for a game, he shook his head, explaining: "No, no, I do not like to lose, and I know you will win."

We had another boss, called Aunt Xiun, a representative of workers from a factory (during the Cultural Revolution, the Party sent representatives of factories everywhere, because chairman Mao said that the working class exercises leadership in everything). She was fat, ugly and old (at least in my eyes). Aunt Xiun was fond of giving admonitions to a group of people as well as to an individual person. I always got very sick when I saw her talking, because she had very thick lips and saliva came out of her mouth all the time.

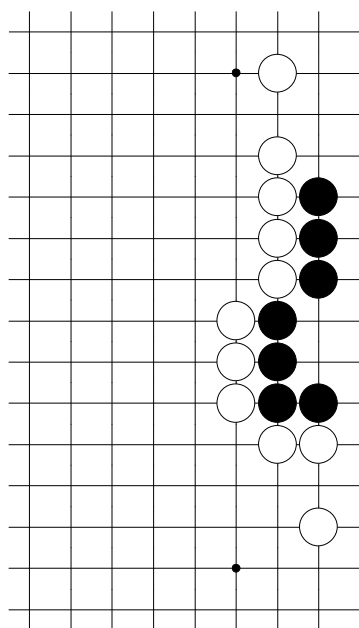
In July of 1973 I became a student of the school. There were not so many students at that time: even if you included the children studying Chinese chess and western chess, the count was only about fifty. But we did have

quite a few teachers. Professional teachers, amateur teachers and even chess teachers, who also liked to 'teach' us Go (to this day I do not know why many of these chess players loved Go so much. Some of them played more Go than chess, their profession). Without doubt there were so many of them because a lot of people didn't work (not because they were unemployed but it was simply impossible to do your job. People were busy with the Revolution or did nothing at all).

We had good Go lessons from our professional teachers and played thousands of games with the amateur teachers. Every afternoon after normal school time, we came to the Go school to have few hours of training. Later we had a intensive class with 12 children. In my intensive class there were ten boys and two girls. Seven of them became professional Go player (today there are two 8D, one 7D, one 6D, one 5D and two 4D), and five of them played in the national team for years. We played Go almost every afternoon, sometimes also during the evenings and six days a week! The competition was very fierce. If you were good you could participate in important tournaments like the provincial championship or even the national championship. You could also be chosen in a team with a couple of other children together to visit other cities. Many Chinese people had to stay in one place all their life, so to go out (by train!) was an extremely exciting event. I remember that in the winter of 1973, I had to play a few games against some boy for a place in a team that was going to participate in a big tournament a month later. I won the match but I felt so sorry for him, because he was extremely sad. He kept saying to the others: "I will beat her next time!" (and he

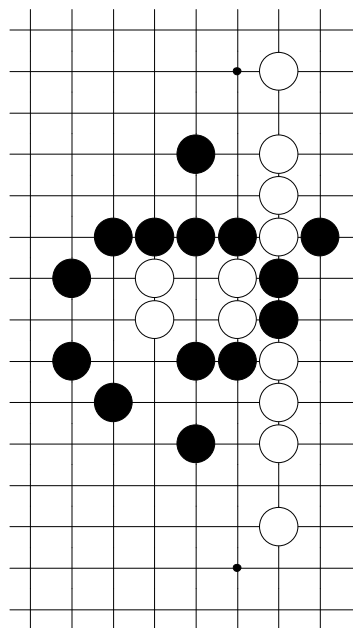
did beat me badly, but fortunately that happened after we came back).

Besides normal training, we often had to do life and death problems. Most of the time one teacher would sit around a table with a couple of children. We all concentrated on the hand of our teacher putting stones slowly on the Go board... When his hand moved away from the board, we fought to be the first one to solve the problem. The following problems are four of the many we did in Go school. Problem 1 is called “Mouse stealing oil”, problem 2 “Dredge up the moon from the seabed”, problem 3 “Golden chicken standing on one leg” and problem 4 “Ghost with a big head”. White is to move in all four of them (would you like to try?). You can find the solutions on the last page. In each diagram White kills Black.



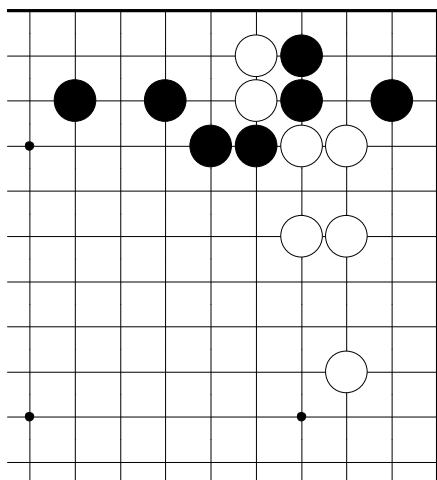
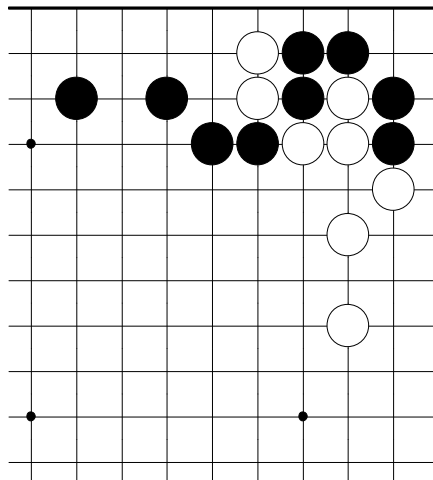
**Problem 1**

*Mouse stealing oil*



**Problem 2**

*Dredge up the moon  
from the seabed*

**Problem 3***Ghost with a big head***Problem 4***Golden chicken standing  
on one leg*

The students from the intensive class slept in the Go school six days a week. We had a lot of fun together, even though we damaged many things of the school by accident. Every morning we woke up at six o'clock by the noise from a bamboo chair (we did not have an alarm clock, so the teacher who slept on the attic hung a rope from his room into our room through the windows, and tied it to a chair. Ringing the alarm was done by pulling the rope). We also had to do physical exercises like running. One of our teachers who had learned a bit of Kong-fu tried to teach us fighting Kong-fu. He gave me a very hard time, because my legs always got extremely painful from the Kong-fu training. Therefore I was always looking for an excuse to escape. Of course no one of us wanted to become a Kong-fu master...

We went to normal school during the day. Most of us were very good at school. We were also a bit special there. I still remember a scene from the third year of my senior high school, when after almost all the other kids

had become Red Guards, the teacher decided to make me also a Red Guard. He said to the class: “Guo Juan plays Go to win honour for her country (I was just a weak amateur but I pretended to do so), she should be good enough to be a Red Guard, even though her family does have some problems” (some members of my family who I did not even know were not so ‘red’).

At that time everything was a bit too ‘red’. For instance, every Sunday evening when we returned back from home, we had to sit together to do some political studies. We also read books and did criticism and self-criticism. We read the Red Books of chairman Mao and also some nice stories. One of the book we read is called “Xiao shizhu”, about the life of a little indomitable boy (extremely revolutionary). Sometimes during the game when the situation was bad for me, I would think about this Xiao shizhu and say to myself: you should be like Xiao shizhu, surmount the difficulties and try to win! Of course I did not think this Xiao shizhu could really help me to win games but I did get some spirit from him.

But the criticism and self-criticism were a big mess. They actually were a very convenient weapon to use when you quarreled with another kid: criticism was your chance to hit back when you had been teased the day before...

Not far from our Go school, there was a playing hall.

Although it could contain a few hundred people, it actually was a rather simple affair. Many of the windows were broken, and there were no carpets or anything else on the floor. The furniture consisted of many wooden tables in bad need of paint and bamboo chairs making a lot of creaking noises when you sat on them (in the summer time bamboo chairs are very popular in Chengdu, because the summer is very hot). Three big



wooden boards were attached to the wall at the far side of the hall opposite the entrance: a Go board in the middle, a Chinese chess board on the left side and a western chess board on the right side. All boards had small pins to hold pieces.

The playing hall was open every day from morning to night, and fans could just drop in, rent a set and play the whole day long. But every Saturday evening the hall would be filled with excited people, because then there were demonstration games by professionals or strong amateurs. Almost every student from the Go school had to “work” there sometimes which meant that you had to hang the stones (as big as two of your palms) from the pins with a very long, thin bamboo stick. It wasn’t easy at all, but all of us liked to do it very much. An important reason for me (and I believe also for the others) was that after the game we could get one or two cakes as compensation (at that time we didn’t have much luxury food in China). There were more nice things, like looking at the waiters. It was a joy to see them running fast between the tables and the excited people, at same time pouring tea in to small and shallow bowls without spilling a drop ( the spout of their kettles was two feet long!). Probably the games were also interesting...

The story above is about my old Go school. At the end of the eighties the school has been moved to a much bigger and ugly building. My old Go school had to make place for a large office building. Maybe it brings a lot of money to some people, but it really made me very sad when I found out that my school disappeared from the face of the earth.

In 1994 I visited the new Go school (in the ugly building). Our teachers are still there, but much busier, because they have hundreds of children now. All the rooms are crowded with children and their parents, the teachers are sweating and running around to answer questions. When I just stepped into one of the rooms, a teacher saw me and he said: “Ah good, you can help me Guo Juan”, instead of: “Hello Guo Juan, long time no see, how are you doing” ...

The following is a game between one of my best friends Wang Jiankun and me. I met Jiankun in the summer of 73 at our Go school. He was a very small and fat boy; we called him fat boy Wang. In the beginning he could give me five stones which made me very angry, and later he became a seven dan professional player. He is well known in China but has never been a top star. In other people's eyes, he is a bit strange, because he is often busy with other things like visiting far away and small villages to teach children and open a company to teach amateurs while other people are busy with improving their Go. But he is still one of my best friends and he really helped me to work on my Go.

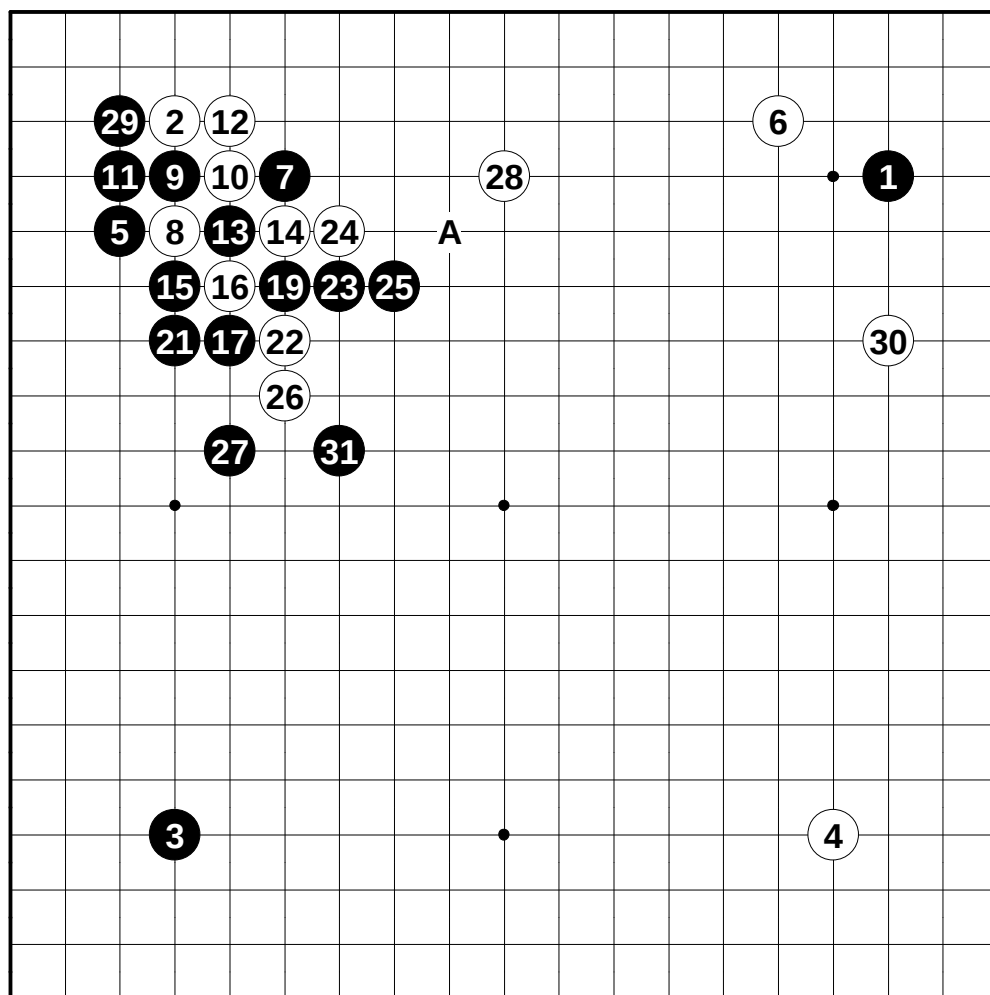
He is a good teacher and extremely severe, often saying things to me like: “you must do this and that...this is the worst move I ever seen...this is the only move to consider at all ...”

This game was played ten months after we learned Go. He was ten years old and I was thirteen. I hope this game will bring you, especially the kyu players a lot of fun and laughter.

**White:** Wang Jiankun

**Black:** Guo Juan

Played in Chengdu Go school, March 26, 1974



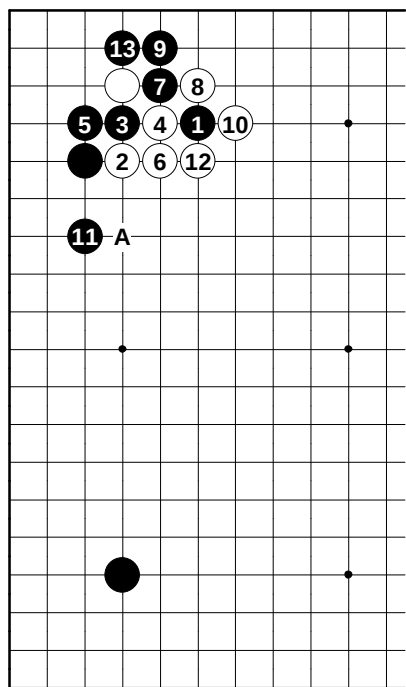
**Figure 1 (1 - 31)**

White 18: takes at 8,      White 20: connects at 13.

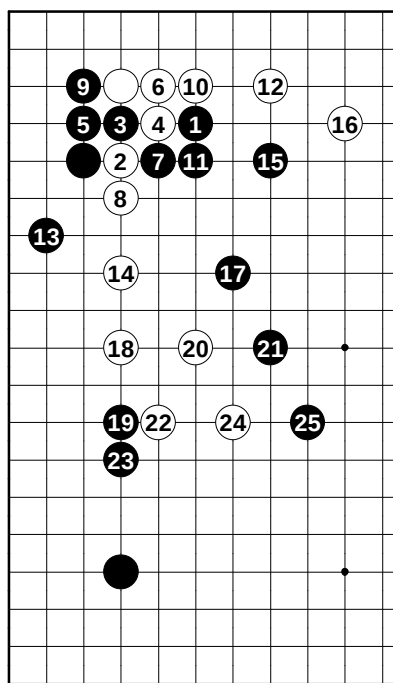
***Figure 1 (1 - 31)***

Right from the start of this game, from moves like Black 3 and 7, and white 8 and 12, you can see that both of the players were not afraid of fighting at all.

As you know, after Black 7, there are hundreds of variations around this corner. The following diagrams are two of the basic *josekis*.



**Diagram 1**

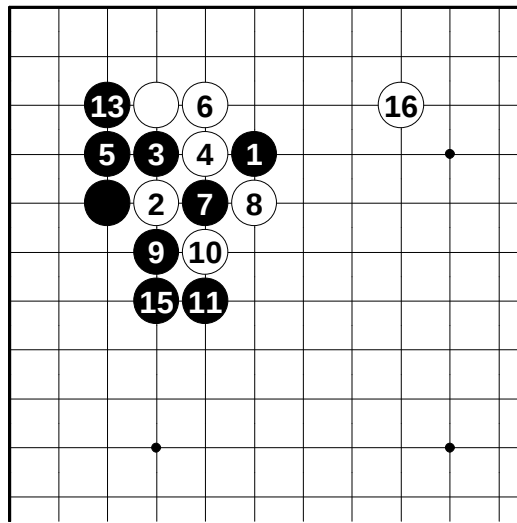


**Diagram 2**

Diagram 1: This is a very simple basic *joseki*. When the ladder is good for white, playing this joseki will never bring you any trouble. Black 11 can also be played at A in case there are Black stones at the lower left side.

Diagram 2: Up to white 18 is another basic *joseki*. But in this game, because Black already has a stone at the lower left corner, Black can attack the white group with a move at 19.

Black 19: Even though I had been in the Go School for just ten months when this game played, I think I already learned a lot of *josekis*. But Black 19 shows that I forgot this joseki a bit. Diagram 3 is correct.



### Diagram 3

(12: takes at 2

14: connects at 7)

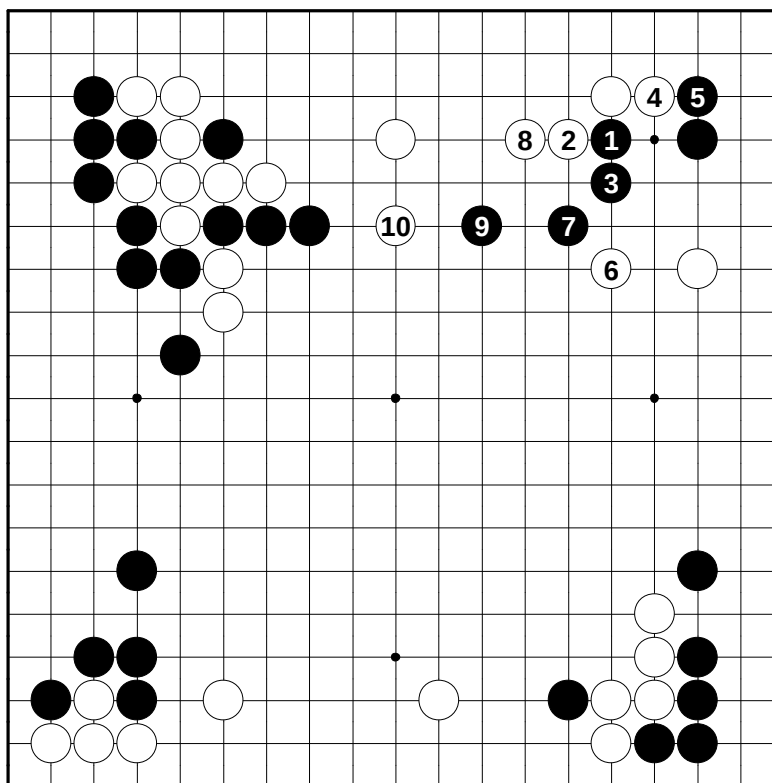
Playing at 13 (instead of Black 19 in the game) is correct. Up to white 16 is a basic *Joseki*.

As students in Go school, we had to learn a lot of *joseki*. Some times people say to me that they do not like to play *joseki* meaning that they don't want to learn them. According to modern Go ideas, *joseki* are much less important today, the way of playing is completely free. Still I believe that to learn a few basic *joseki* is necessary, especially for amateur players. Because amateurs have much less knowledge than professionals, you simply can not discover them at the board, and if you lose a game already in the beginning because your opponent tricked you in a *joseki*, that is a great pity.

White 22: An overplay. Should be played at 23, and if Black answers at 22, White could play at 29. But as a ten years old boy you are allowed to be angry if your opponent makes a mistake in such a simple *joseki*.

Black 29: A very big move! I remember that once one of our teachers told us that the value of this move is thirty points. I do not really know how he calculated this, but in any case it is a **big** move.

White 30: Very clever. We can see the idea behind this move in diagram 4: attack the Black stone in the corner and drive it into the centre. After Black 9, White has a splitting attack with 10.



**Diagram 4**

Black 31: Also very clever, because Black had seen what was going to happen. After Black 31, the two white stones are dead because Black has a *sente* play at A.

\*\*\*\*\*

Our amateur teachers are very proud of themselves to have taught in Go school. In their mind we are still very small and weak at the game. Some years later once when I visited home, a neighbour came to me: “Guo Juan, you must help me”, “what can I do for you?”, “somebody at my work is terribly strong, he beats every body and his

head is spinning with success. Once I mentioned your name and do you know what did he said?” “What?” “He said: oh, that little girl, I can give her four stones. So, can you please beat the hell out of him for us?” “Ok”. The match was held on a sunny afternoon. We started with a four stone handicap game. He gave me four stones, and when we finished two hours later, I gave him four stones. “Guo Juan, you seem to have improved”, “Thank you teacher!”.

\*\*\*\* \*

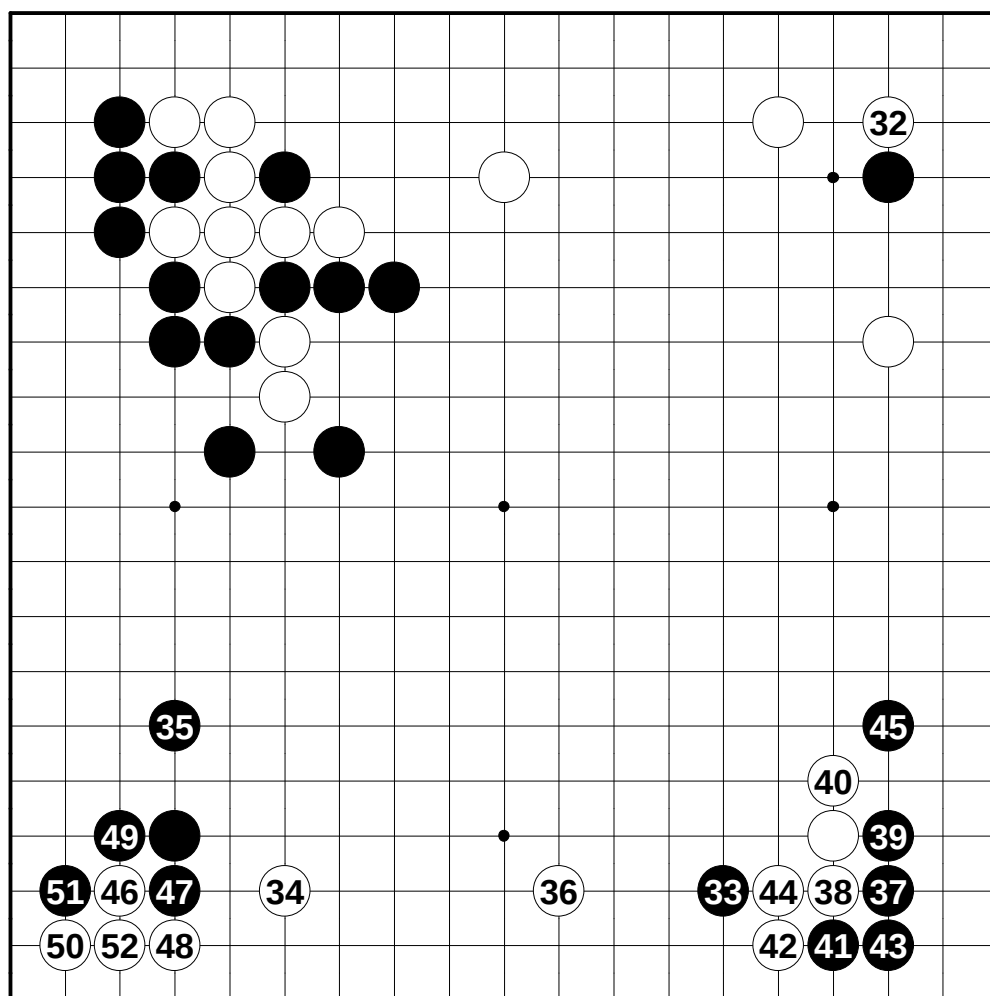


Figure 2 (32 - 52)

**Figure 2 ( 32 - 52)**

White 34 and 36: A very good combination. However, at this moment the situation is good for Black and the Black territory at the left side is growing too big. Therefore White 34 should be played at 1 in diagram 5 and 6.

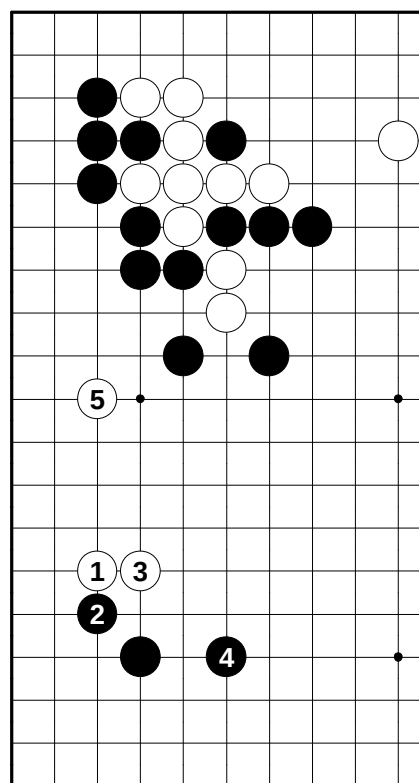
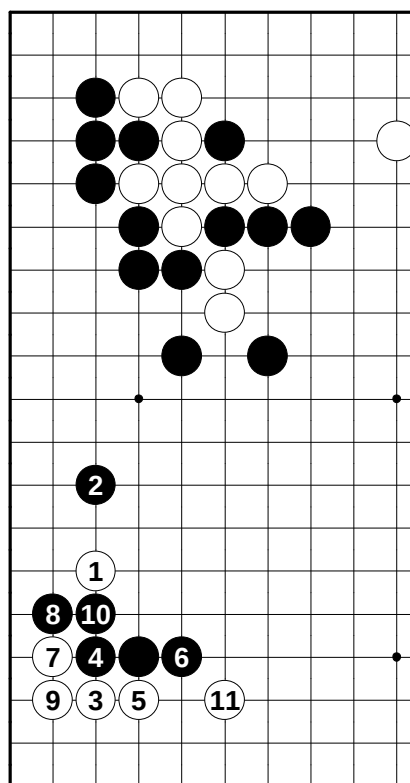
**Diagram 5****Diagram 6**

Diagram 5: If Black plays at 2 and 4, White plays at 5. The Black *moyo* has disappeared.

Diagram 6: If Black plays at 2 to keep her *moyo*, after 11 White has a big corner and the Black *moyo* is also a bit smaller.

White 46: A big move. It takes the corner away and at same time defends at the lower side (because White has eyes in the corner now). But it is still a bit too slow. Diagram 7 and 8 are some other options for white.



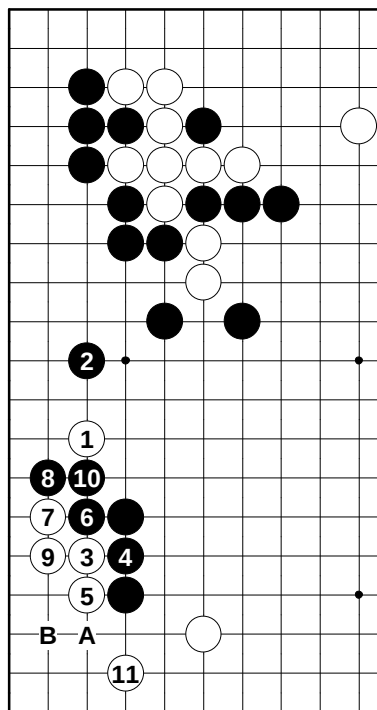


Diagram 7

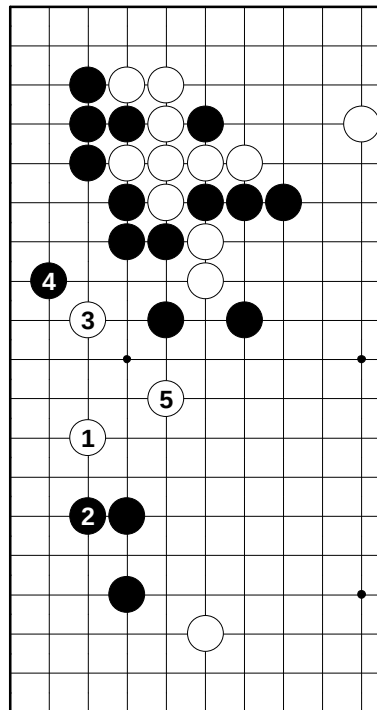


Diagram 8

Diagram 7: The invasion of White 1 is necessary in this situation. If Black plays *hasami* with a move at 2, White counters with 3 and the follow-up is a standard variation. After White 11, the Black *moyo* is not so frightening anymore.

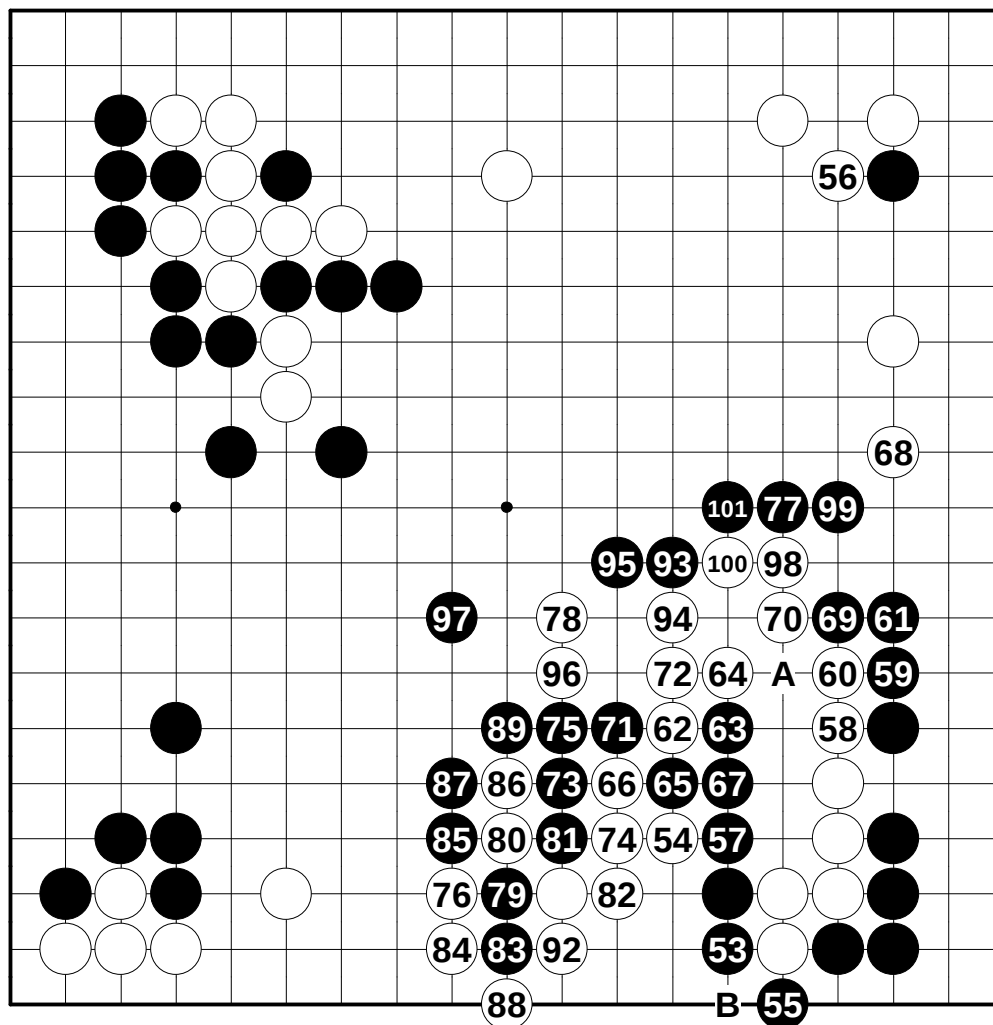
Question: Is the White corner (in Diagram 7) safe?  
 Answer: yes, it is safe. If Black *hanes* at A, White *hanes* at B.

Diagram 8: If Black responds at 2, after white 5, it becomes a fighting game.

\* \* \* \*

Cover: The name of the problem is composed of the five Chinese characters “wu gui bu chu tou” meaning the turtle head can not stick out.

\* \* \* \*



**Figure 3 (53 - 101)**

White 90: played at 80,

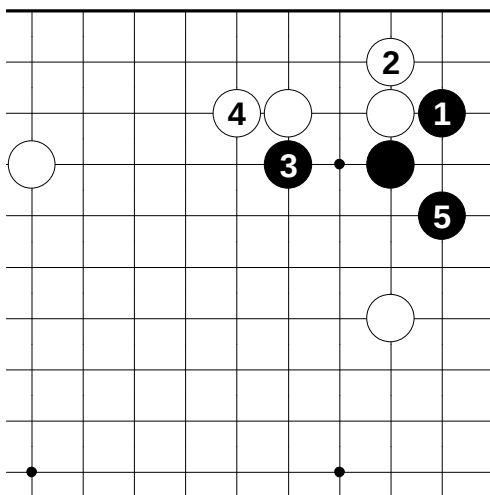
Black 91: played at 86.

***Figure 3 (53 - 101)***

Black 53: Hits white's weak spot, but it is a bit impatient. Black should start in the upper right corner right now as in diagram 9 (see next page).

White 54: Locally, this is not the correct move (normally White would play something like 57 or B), but globally it is very flexible. After Black 55, this ten years old boy

took *sente* to play at 56, the biggest move on the board at this moment!

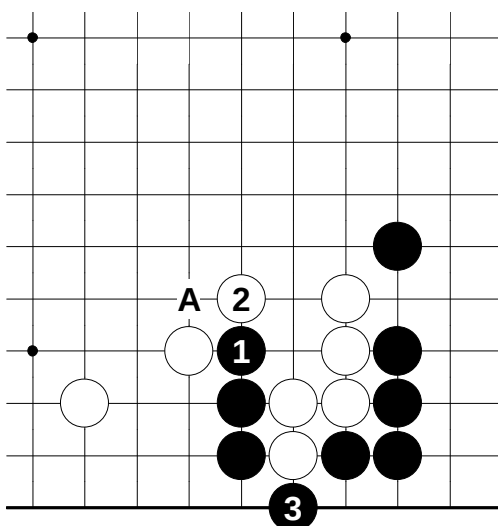


### Diagram 9

Black starts with a move at 1. After Black 5, it is not easy for White to kill this Black group.

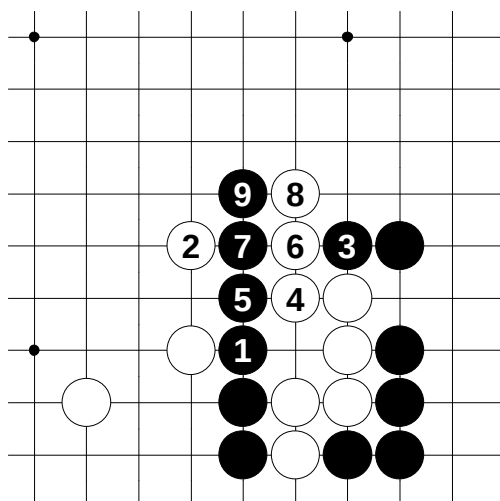
In the game White's corner became too big.

Black 55: Does not really understand the position. Black 53 was not a urgent move, although severe. After White 54, Black seemingly did not know how to continue. Here I have Diagram 10 and 11 for you:



### Diagram 10

Black should push once at 1, if White *hanes* at 2, Black plays at 3. Now we can see that after this exchange of 1 for 2, there is a cutting point at A left for white. That makes it difficult for White to take *sente*.

**Diagram 11**

If White responds at 2, Black can immediately break through with the moves of 3 to 9.

In this case, White would probably not get the chance to play at 56 in the game.

White 58 to 62: A good way to respond to the Black attacking move 57.

Black 63, 65: Because White got the big move 56 and made good shape with 58 to 62, Black became a bit impatient. These two moves are not wise at all, they only make White stronger.

White 68: Wang Jiankun believed that 68 is bigger than the several White stones at the lower right corner. His ideas always have been very flexible. But I think White should still defend at 72.

Black 69 and 71: Black believes that White's idea is right. So, instead of playing at A to kill eight White stones, Black 69 and 71 make the White group bigger and attack it as a whole.

White 70 and 74: After having been so clever, White still falls into Black's trap. These moves are too heavy. First White should play 70 as in diagram 12. Next White should play 74 as in diagram 13.

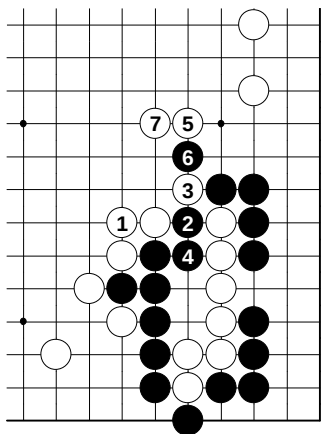


Diagram 12

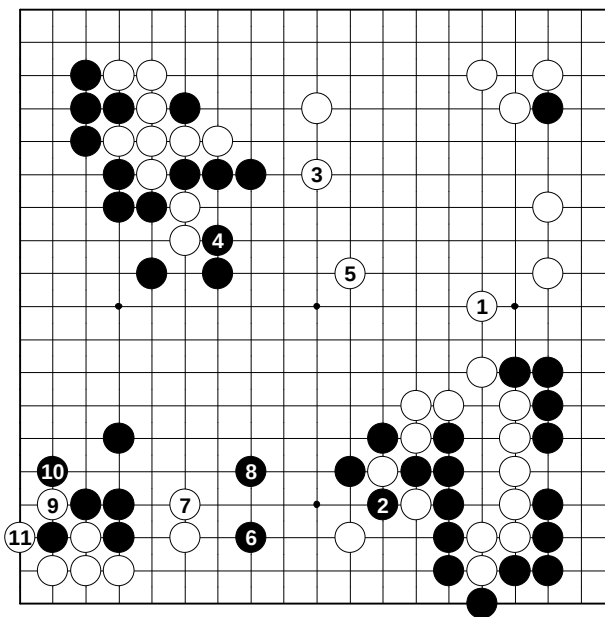


Diagram 13

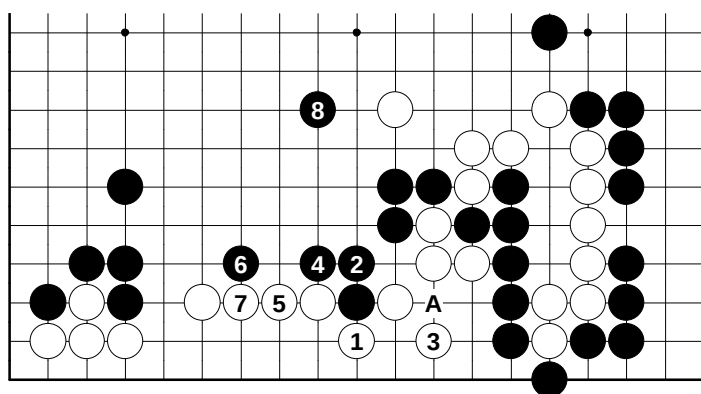
**Diagram 12:** White should continue his idea and force the eight White stones through Black's throat. After White 7, White could build strong influence on the outside.

**Diagram 13:** White 1, closing the right side is the best move at this moment. After White 5, we can see that White suddenly built a large *moyo*!

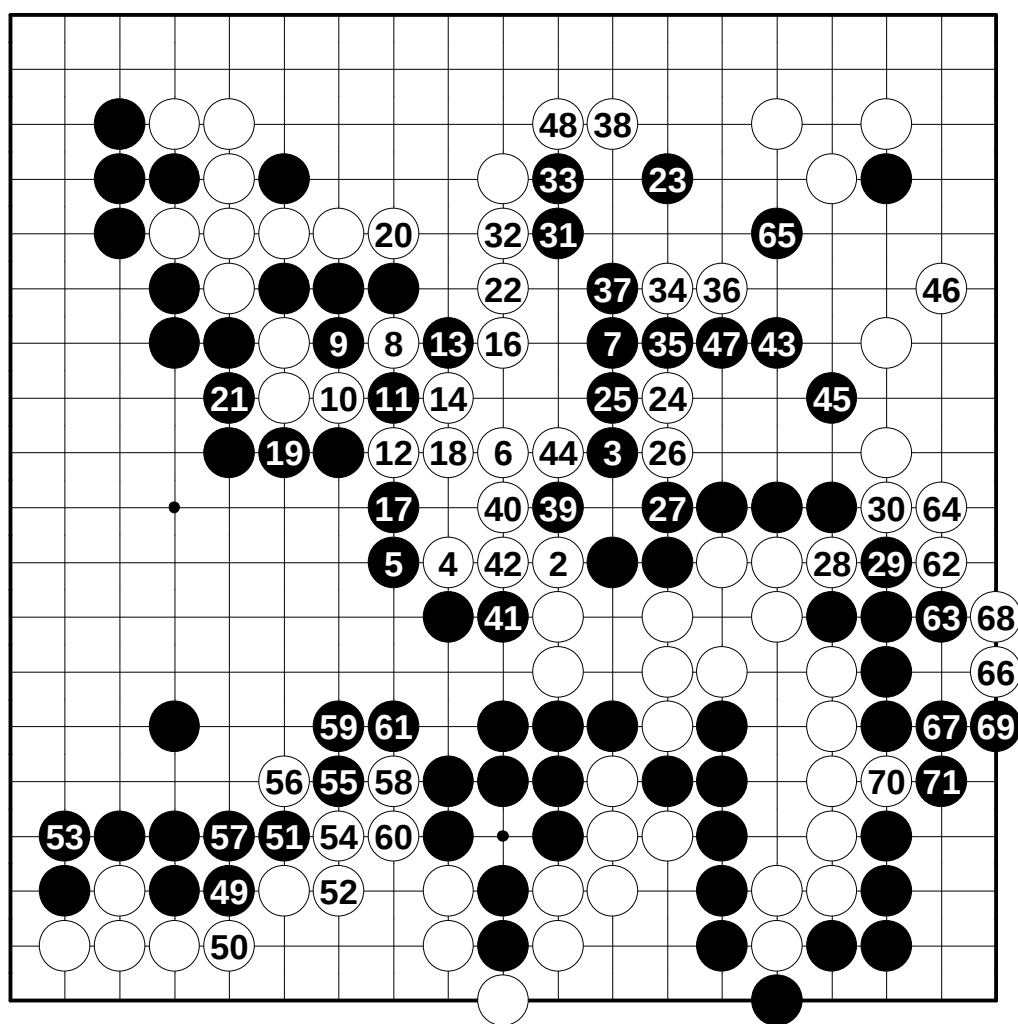
**Black 79:** A *tesuji*.

**White 80:** After 23 years when I replayed this game, I had to laugh over this move: Oh poor Jiankun, he did not see the ladder (Black 85). But now, when I'm writing this article, I suddenly realised that he did see the ladder of course (little boys read this kind of things especially well), But he did not like the result if White plays 80 at 83 as in diagram 14.

However, after Black 85 it is a disaster for White. Black becomes too strong.



**Diagram 14**  
White 3 is  
necessary,  
otherwise  
Black has a  
move at A.



**Figure 4 2 - 71 (102 - 171)**

Black 15: connects at 8.

**Figure 4 2 - 71( 102 - 171)**

Black 19: Could also be played at 22. I believe that Black saw that she was winning, so she did not want any trouble anymore.

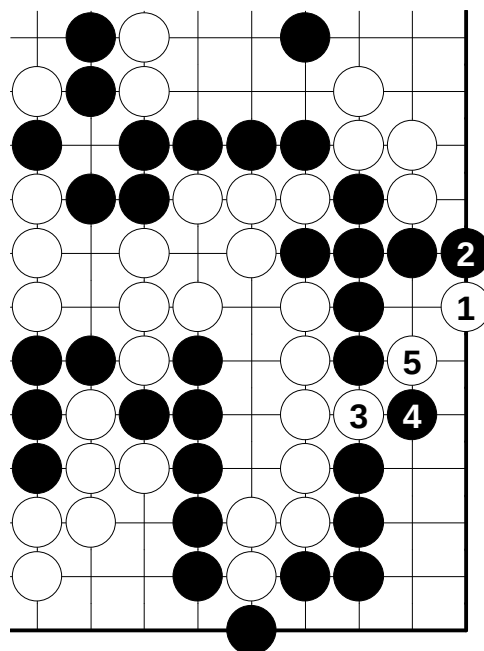
White 30 to 38: Jiankun saw that he was behind as well, so he has to kill the big Black group. But it is too difficult.

Black 31 and 33: Good shape for making eyes. After 47, Black is alive.

Black 53: Not only big (more than ten points), but also gives good *aji*.

White 66: A very tricky and typical young children's *tesuji*. It also was the last try.

Black 67: Luckily she saw the trick. If Black was careless and plays as in diagram 15, rest of the day would be dark for her...

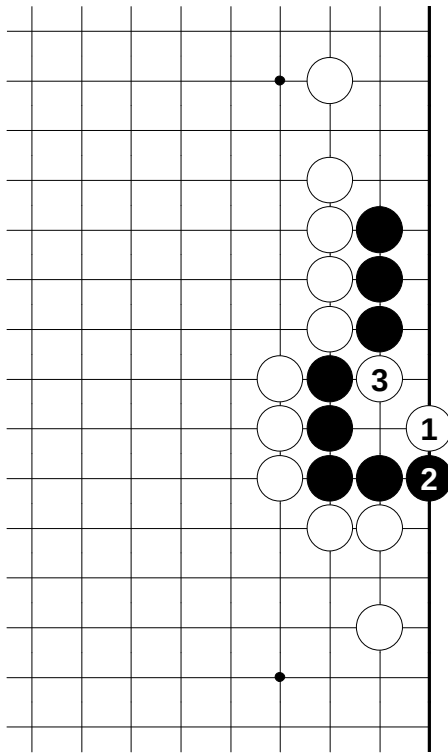


**Diagram 15** (see also problem 1) Black 2 is too greedy. After White 5, Black is dead! Playing at 1 instead of pushing first at 3 was very sly, certainly for someone who learned Go only ten month ago; a clever trap indeed. I have seen many children including myself cry because after having fallen into this kind of trap or rejoice because their trap had succeeded,

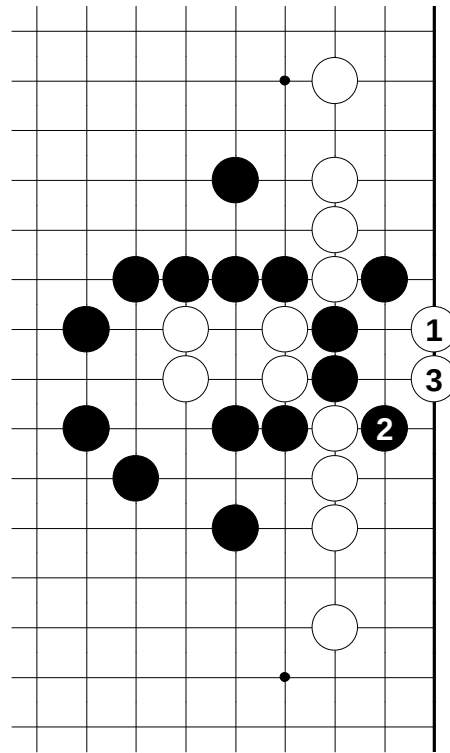
even when they had to face an angry teacher afterwards (they did not really like us only concentrating on making traps).

After Black 69, there was no chance anymore for White.  
After a few more moves, White resigned.

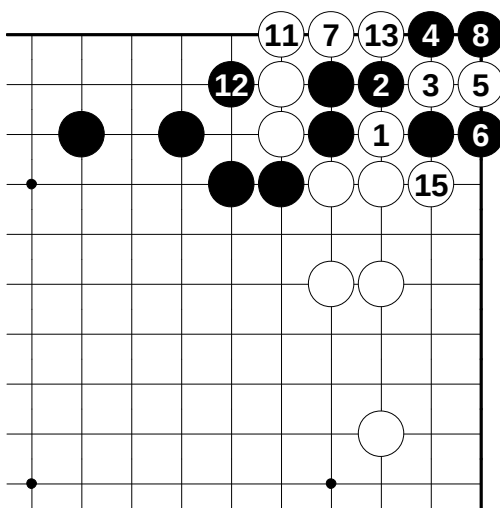
The answers to the problems:



**Problem 1**

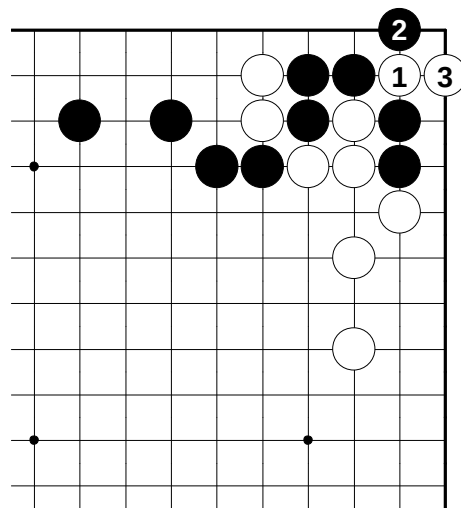


**Problem 2**



**Problem 3**

White 9: Plays at 3  
Black 10: Plays at 5



**Problem 4**



